

DoD Joint Conference:

# Improving the **Quality of Life** for Military Families with Special Needs



November 16-18, 2009  
Jacksonville, Florida

## After Action Report

## Executive Summary

The Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) sponsored the DoD/ Joint Services Conference: Improving the Quality of Life for Military Families with Special Needs, which was held in conjunction with the World Congress on Disabilities (WCD). The Conferences were held in Jacksonville, Florida and ran November 16-18 and November 19-20 respectively.

The DoD/Joint Services Conference provided family support personnel with the latest information on programs and services available to military families with special needs. Presentations targeted topics such as the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), legislative updates, a three-part presentation on systems navigation, the military system, federal programs such as Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and access to other programs by individuals with disabilities.

In addition to the presentations, the Conference showcased a Family Panel representing ten military families with special needs children. The panel spoke to participants about their challenges, their successes, and the people and programs that have helped them. Time was provided for questions and answers during the panel and afterwards.

The Conference culminated with a robust Call To Action. Participants were asked to spread the word about the EFMP, encourage families to enroll, and make families aware of the support provided at the family centers.



## Participant Breakdown



### Installations

### Participants

### Functional Areas

#### US Army

Aberdeen Proving Ground	1	Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist
Camp Darby	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Camp Zama	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
Dugway Proving Ground	1	Family Advocacy Program/Exceptional Family Member Program/Sexual Assault Program Manager
Fort Belvoir	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Benning	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
Fort Bragg	4	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager, Exceptional Family Member Program Specialist, Family Program Coordinator, Social Services Assistant
Fort Buchanan	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Campbell	5	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator, Exceptional Family Member Program Managers, Exceptional Family Member Program Special Needs Advisor, Health Technician/Overseas Screening
Fort Carson	2	Garrison Command Sgt Major, Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Detrick	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Drum	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Eustis	1	Social Services Assistance Coordinator
Fort Gordon	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Hood	1	Manager
Fort Jackson	3	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator, RN, BSN, Soldier and Family Assistance Program Manager
Fort Leavenworth	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Leonard Wood	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Specialist
Fort Lewis	2	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinators
Fort McCoy	2	Family Advocacy Program Manager, Not Identified
Fort McPherson	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Meade	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
Fort Monmouth	1	
Fort Riley	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
Fort Sam Houston	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Fort Sill	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager

*Participant Breakdown, Continued*

Fort Wainwright	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Heidelberg, Schwetzingen	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Management Assistant
Rock Island Arsenal	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Tobyhanna Army Depot	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Tripler Army Medical Center	1	Chief, Office of Special Needs and Services
USAG Bamberg	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Baumholder	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Brussels	1	Family Advocacy Program Manager
USAG Camp Casey	1	Family Advocacy Specialist
USAG Chievres	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
USAG Daegu	1	Family Advocacy Program/Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Detroit Arsenal	1	Family Advocacy/Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Grafenwoehr	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Heidelberg	2	Exceptional Family Member Program Director, Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Humphreys	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Kaiserslautern	2	Parent, Special Needs Child, Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Mannheim	1	Program Manager
USAG Miami	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Schinnen	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Schweinfurt	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Stuttgart	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
USAG Torii Station	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
USAG Vicenza	2	Exceptional Family Member Program Specialist, Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
USAG Wiesbaden	1	Outreach Services Manager
USAG Yongsan	1	Army Community Service Director
Walter Reed Army Medical Center	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
West Point Military Academy	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Yokosuka	1	School Liaison Officer

## US Marine Corps

Camp Pendleton	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Attorney
Camp Allen	1	Marine Corps Family Team Building Director
Camp Lejuene	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Camp Pendleton	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Camp S.D. Butler	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Henderson Hall	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
MCB Quantico	3	Associate Counsel, Exceptional Family Member Program Manager, Not Identified
MCLB Albany	1	Director
MCAS Beaufort/MCRD Paris Island	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
MCAS Cherry Point	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
MCAS Iwakuni	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
MCAS Miramar	2	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager, Not Identified
MCAS New River	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
MCB Hawaii	1	
MCRD San Diego	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Schofield Barracks	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager

**US Navy**

JEB Little Creek	2	New Parent Support Programs, Not Identified
NAS Fallon	1	Site Manager
NAS Jacksonville	2	RN, Case Manager, School Liaison Officer
NAS Sigonella	1	Relocation/ICR/Information and Referral Supervisor
NAS Whidbey Island	1	Program Administrator
National Naval Center, Bethesda	1	Director
Naval Academy	1	Information and Referral Specialist
NB Guam (Joint Region Marianas)	1	School Liaison Officer
NB San Diego	1	School Liaison Officer
Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton	1	Division Officer NHCP
Navy Region Hawaii	1	Family Life Educator
NS Great Lakes	1	School Liaison Officer
NS Norfolk	3	School Liaison Officers, Special Needs Board Member
NS Rota	1	Life Skills Educator
NSA Naples	1	Child and Youth Program Manager
NSB King's Bay	1	School Liaison Officer
NWS Charleston	1	Not Listed
Pearl Harbor Hawaii	1	School Liaison Officer
US Fleet Activities Sasebo	1	Information and Referral Specialist
Washington Navy Yard	3	Work and Family Life Consultant, Auditor

**US Air Force**

Altus AFB	1	Airman and Family Readiness Chief
Andrews AFB	1	Chief
Barksdale AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Beale AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Bolling AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Cannon AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Charleston AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Davis-Monthan AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Dover AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Dyess AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Eglin AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Elmendorf AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Fairchild AFB	1	Community Readiness Technician
Grand Forks AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Hickam AFB	2	Work Life Specialist, Community Readiness Analyst
Hill AFB	1	School Liaison Officer
Hurlburt Field	1	Chief
Lackland AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Langlely AFB	1	Work/Life Specialist
Little Rock AFB	2	Special Needs Coordinator, Community Readiness Consultant
Los Angeles AFB	1	Chief
Luke AFB	1	School Liaison Officer
MacDill AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Malmstrom AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
McChord AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant

## Participant Breakdown, Continued

McConnell AFB	1	Director
Minot AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Nellis AFB	2	Community Readiness Technicians
Offutt AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Osan AB	1	Work and Family Life Specialist
Patrick AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Peterson AFB	3	Airman and Family Program Analyst, Chief, School Liaison Officer
Pope AFB	1	School Liaison Officer
RAF Lakenheath	1	Supervisory, Community Readiness Consultant
Ramstein AB	2	Community Readiness Consultant, Not Identified
Randolph AFB	3	Not Identified, Community Readiness Analyst, Community Readiness Consultant
Robins AFB	2	Community Outreach Specialist, Airman and Family Readiness Chief
Schriever AFB	1	Not Identified
Scott AFB	2	Chief, Community Readiness Consultant
Shaw AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Spangdahlem AB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Tinker AFB	1	Community Readiness Technician
Travis AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Vandenberg AFB	1	Community Readiness Consultant
Wright-Patterson AFB	1	Family Readiness Technician

## Joint Bases/Others

Joint Base Andrews NAF Washington	1	Training and Curriculum Specialist
Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager
Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Coordinator
Military District of Washington	1	Personnel Readiness Chief
Pentagon - Air Force	3	Airman and Family Services Specialist, Asst. Deputy Family Program, Not Identified
Pentagon - Navy	2	Director, Deputy, Family Readiness
Presidio of Monterey	1	Exceptional Family Member Program Manager

## How many years have you been working in the Exceptional Family Member Program?

0 to 3	4 to 7	8 to 10	10 +	Not Designated	TOTAL
113	19	9	23	7	171



## Conference Highlights

### Family Panel



### Plenary Sessions

#### Military OneSource (MOS)

The MOS presentation provides a basic overview of MOS Specialty Services and the full range of support available to military families with special needs. Medical and educational services, access points, the Call Center, and Outreach Services information were highlighted with special emphasis on the different types of counseling options and the process for referrals. Information was also presented regarding free educational materials and the DoD library.

#### TRICARE

This presentation provided basic information on the TRICARE program and available options. It examined the differences between the TRICARE plan, Military Treatment Facilities (MTF), and civilian health care facilities, and highlighted information regarding where to go to get assistance with benefits, case management services, and debt collection assistance. It particularly focused on providing an overview of the basic benefits of TRICARE for those with special needs and the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO).

#### Legislative Update

This presentation outlined the latest legislative changes to the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2010 Section 563. Section 1781c is the newest legislative effort to more fully provide clarification and support to military families with special needs. This amendment provides support for conducting outreach to identify military families, developing programs and support services, developing educational curricula, and conducting research using the unique factors associated with a military career and evidence-based therapeutic medical services.



### Systems Navigation

This three-part plenary explored the benefits of following a systems navigation process for decision-making are outlined. Core concepts of systems navigation, frequently used terms, the types of systems families with special needs might encounter, and the differences between services and supports were explained. Part 1 focused on installation-based system; Part 2 focused on system navigations within the state and community; and Part 3 addressed public benefits linked to disability.

### Special Education Law and Advocacy

Peter Wright - Nationally known lawyer and advocate for children with educational disabilities conducted a three hour seminar on special education law and advocating for children with disabilities. Participants received copies of his books.

### Professional Education

Keri Bowers - Mother, author and film maker of "Normal People Scare Me," discussed her film, which had been shown the evening before her presentation, and discussed what professionals need to know when they are working with families who have a child with a disability.



### Compassion versus Complacency

This presentation explored the difference between compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. The emotional and psychological cost of caring for others and the consistent stress make service providers more vulnerable to compassion fatigue. The session focused on developing strategies for building resiliency and using strengths to avoid or recover from burnout, stay emotionally healthy, and provide quality care to military families.

### Individual Service breakouts

**US Army:** Respite Care

**US Marine Corps:** Operational Implementation of MCO 1754.4B; Managing Critical Situations; Case Worker Protocol/Systems Navigation

**US Navy:** EFMP Policy and Overview; Respite Care; Systems Navigation for Military Children with Significant Disabilities

**US Air Force:** EFMP Assignment Process; Transition (Schools/Relocation); Systems Navigation for Military Children with Significant Disabilities



## EFMP Campaign Overview

The EFMP Working Group members have been developing a strategic communication plan for the Program. One of the objectives of the plan was to develop an EFMP logo and tag line to be used by all Services for their marketing and program implementation needs. The logo was designed to increase awareness of the program and to provide uniform branding and recognition of EFMP amongst service members and their families. Many designs were considered. The new logo design was selected based on survey results from Service members and military families. It has bright, bold colors in a modern design with the tagline, “Exceptional Families, Exceptional Service.” The logo, tag line, and awareness campaign materials were launched at the Conference and elicited many positive remarks.

The Conference culminated in a Call To Action. Participants were asked to spread the word about the EFMP, encourage families to enroll, and make families aware of the support provided at the family centers. The Working Group’s hope was for participants to leave the Conference informed, inspired, and motivated to get involved.



## Exceptional Family Member Program Working Group

### **Rebecca Posante**

Director, Office of Communications, Office of the Secretary of Defense

### **Isabel Hodge**

EFMP Program Manager/Family Support, Office of the Secretary of Defense

### **Lorie Sebestyen**

EFMP Program Manager/IDEA and Assignments, Office of the Secretary of Defense

### **Susan Johnson**

Assistant Deputy for Child, Youth and Schools, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army  
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)

### **Sharon Fields**

EFMP Manager, Headquarters Army

### **Evonne Carawan**

Office of ASN (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Director, Personnel Readiness and Community Support

### **Kathy Robertson**

Deputy for Family Readiness, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy  
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)

### **Rhondavena LaPorte**

EFMP Supervisory Program Manager, Headquarters Marine Corps

### **Marcia Hagood**

Policy Analyst/EFMP Manager, Personal and Family Readiness Division, N135, Navy

### **Linda Stephens-Jones**

Assistant Deputy (Force Support and Family Programs), Office of the Assistant Secretary of  
the Air Force (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)

### **Teresa Barrow**

Airman and Family Services Specialist, Headquarters Air Force

### **Kelly Hruska**

Government Relations Deputy Director, National Military Family Association

### **Cyndy Brissenden**

Coordinator of Clinical  
Services for Military  
OneSource



## Post Conference Feedback

### Question 1: What information did you learn that will help you in your work with exceptional family members?

#### Trends:

- › The Wright Law Books and presentation by Peter Wright
- › legal aspects of special needs
- › different resources, websites, and information
- › TRICARE presentation/information

#### Specific Quotes:

“The plenary on ‘Special Education Law’ was very informative....Resource materials provided are a plus”

“We can never know too much about TRICARE and how to work that system.”

“I gained additional knowledge about respite care that I can implement at my installation.”

“I am (now) armed with the resources to find the answers.”



### Question 2: What questions do you still have regarding the information presented at the Conference?

#### Trends:

- › What are the roles/steps for the EFMP managers?
- › What will the impact be of the new legislation and when will we get updates on this?
- › What are the respite care policies and procedures both within and outside the continental United States (CONUS and OCONUS)?
- › How will the EFMP be implemented for Reserve/Guard families?

#### Specific Quotes:

“Respite care continues to be a constant issue, always changing and too much gray! We need black and white, formal policy and procedure.”

“Laws from the agency side as well/not just from the parent’s perspective.”

“What exactly will our role be” and “need more details on how to make this work.”

“Request information on respite care for Europe, Korea, and other OCONUS locations.”

### Question 3: What more do you feel that DoD or the Services could do to support the Exceptional Family Member Program?

#### Trends:

- › provide clear guidance on roles
- › more staffing and funding
- › standardization/making EFMP “purple”
- › more training and conferences
- › marketing the program for a wider dissemination of information
- › making/enforcing mandatory EFMP



#### Specific Quotes:

- “Standardized letters or creating a database so that transition is smoother from installation to installation.”
- “Marketing for family members....Many great opportunities to help family members, and they have no clue.”
- “More staff, and dedicated staff to help make the EFMP successful. Shouldn’t be a collateral duty.”
- “Training once a year to provide the most up to date information, and help educate new staff (high turnover rates).”
- “Have higher support to help enforce enrollment in the program. EFMP Managers can only do so much, but cannot force enrollment.”
- “It appears that each command is establishing guidance. Need clear guidelines.”
- “Make it “purple” so what one Service is offering other branches will have.”

Statement	(Agree or Strongly Agree) Percentage
<i>The Conference was well-organized and managed.</i>	85%
<i>I gained knowledge and tangible ideas at this Conference that will help me in my current position.</i>	92%
<i>The Conference provided me with beneficial opportunities for networking.</i>	92%
<i>I liked the new EFMP logo and thought that it positively reflected the program and those who support it.</i>	91%
<i>Overall the Conference met my expectations.</i>	88%

## Lessons Learned

1. Logistics. Location of conference center was inconvenient for on-your-own lunches.
2. Further training is required for individuals who attended the conference but were new to the jobs. Many expressed a need to understand their roles and responsibilities.